

EPA Proposes Raritan Bay Site to Superfund List

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(New York, NY)—In a continued effort to protect the health of people who enjoy the beaches in several New Jersey neighborhoods, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing to add shoreline sections of Old Bridge Township and Sayreville to the Superfund National Priorities List (NPL). The listing would enable EPA to do an investigation into the extent of contamination at the Raritan Bay Slag site and to take the proper measures to address the contamination.

"High levels of lead have been found in the slag and other material used in the seawall and a jetty," said Acting Regional Administrator George Pavlou. "Slag is a byproduct of metal smelting and usually contains the metal being refined. With the listing of this site, EPA will figure out how to safely and effectively deal with this contamination, and we will work with the affected communities to keep them informed as we get the job done."

The Raritan Bay Slag site consists of three areas with lead-contaminated material, including slag and pieces of battery casings. identified areas include two areas that contain contaminated slag material used to construct a seawall and a jetty along the southern shore of the Raritan Bay in Old Bridge Township and Sayreville, as well as areas of Margaret's Creek in Old Bridge. The first location is on the Laurence Harbor seawall, which is adjacent to the Old Bridge Waterfront Park in the Laurence Harbor section of Old Bridge Township. The second section consists of the western jetty in Sayreville and extends from the Cheesequake Creek inlet into Raritan Bay. The third area is approximately 50 acres associated with Margaret's Creek where elevated lead levels have been found throughout the area. EPA is seeking public comment on the proposed listing of the site.

in summer 2007, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) took soil samples along the southern shoreline of the Raritan Bay adjacent to the Old Bridge Waterfront Park, which revealed the presence of high concentrations of lead. NJDEP described the waste material found in the Laurence Harbor seawall as consisting of large pieces of rust-colored slag, as well as battery casing fragments of various sizes.

As a result of these findings, NJDEP worked closely with Old Bridge officials to notify the public in writing about health concerns stemming from the lead waste material and restricted access through signage and some fencing. Due to physical constraints, however, it was not practical to completely fence off contaminated areas and access to these areas remained a concern.

NJDEP referred the site to EPA and in September 2008, EPA took samples at the site. The samples revealed that several portions of the Laurence Harbor seawall and the western jetty of the Cheesequake Creek inlet consist of lead-contaminated slag. Battery casing fragments were also noted in all three areas. While sampling, EPA observed that the tidal Raritan Bay waters come in contact with the slag at the locations of the seawall and the jetty during high tide. The Raritan Bay is a fishery and a sensitive environment that has been identified under EPA's National Estuary Program. The bay is also a state-designated water body for the maintenance of aquatic life. Margaret's Creek is known to be habitat for state threatened species, and is predominantly a wetland. EPA's Removal Action Branch has already begun work by erecting public warning notices in the areas of concern, warning, in both English and Spanish, of the threat posed by the elevated lead levels. Additionally, fencing has been installed to restrict access.

With the proposal of this site to the NPL, a 60-day comment period will begin during which EPA solicits public input regarding this action. For instructions to submit comments go to <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/npl/pubcom.htm> or contact Dennis Munhall, Region 2 NPL Coordinator at (212) 637-4343 or munhall.dennis@epa.gov. Once the site is placed on the NPL, EPA will expand its investigations to further define the nature and extent of contamination.

To date, there have been 1,596 sites listed on the NPL. Of these sites, 332 have been deleted, resulting in 1,264 sites currently on the NPL. There are now 67 proposed sites awaiting final agency action. There are a total of 1,331 final and proposed sites around the country.

To find out more about the NPL Site Listing Process, visit: http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/npl/npl_hrs.htm. For a Google Earth aerial view of the Raritan Bay Slag site: http://www.epa.gov/region2/kml/raritan_bay_slag_site.kmz. (Please note that you



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EPA to fence off high-lead hot spots along Raritan Bay

by Aliyah Shahid/For The Star-Ledger
Thursday March 19, 2009, 6:29 PM

Signs and fencing will be erected within two weeks to restrict public access to three beachfront areas deemed hazardous along the Raritan Bay in Old Bridge and Sayreville, the Environmental Protection Agency said Thursday.

After finding extremely high lead levels in the area, the EPA has called for the immediate closing of the western jetty near Cheesequake Creek in Old Bridge, a small beach north of the jetty in Sayreville and at the Laurence Harbor seawall.

Beth Totman, a spokeswoman for the EPA, said the necessary paperwork to put up the signs and fencing was submitted Thursday.



Aliyah Shahid/For The Star-Ledger

Jerry Bonnett of Westfield was hoping to catch dinner on Tuesday. He has been fishing near Laurence Harbor and Cheesequake Creek for 40 years.

Meanwhile, medical and environmental experts were alarmed by the levels of lead reported along the waterfront.

"While a single exposure might not pose an acute health threat in itself, lead levels in the body accumulate over a person's lifetime," said Iris Udasin, an associate professor of Environmental and Occupational Medicine at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark. "Therefore, time spent on a beach contaminated this way could add significantly to levels of lead already in the body."

Udasin said the reported lead levels are alarmingly high, at least 10 times higher than acceptable lead levels in workplace situations.

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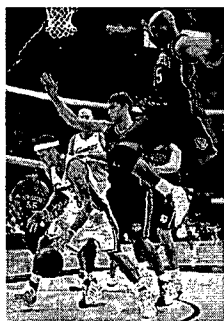
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The EPA conducted the tests in September and released the results to officials in Old Bridge and Sayreville last week.

At the Laurence Harbor seawall area, the range of lead sampled was as high as 142,000 parts per million. At the western jetty near Cheesequake Creek, the highest levels found were 198,000 parts per million. The average in the area was 52,399 parts per million. On the small beach area in Sayreville, the range of lead sampled was as high as 142,000 parts per million.

According to the EPA's website, lead is considered a hazard when it exceeds 1,200 parts per million in children's play areas.

"The scary thing is every time the water comes up on the sand, it will probably carry lead into the water and back out," said Steven Marcus, executive director of New Jersey Poison Information and Education System. "We got a bunch of kids that we see that we never can find the source of lead. This opens a whole new can of worms."

Bob Spiegel, executive director of Edison Wetlands Association, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the cleanup of hazardous waste sites, is concerned that signs and fencing are not enough. "To simply put up signs and fences is a Band-Aid on a surgical wound," said Spiegel. "There's going to be more areas that are affected."

The DEP began testing wetlands in Old Bridge about two years ago when the township was looking to sell property, said Ed Putnam, the DEP's assistant director of the publicly funded remediation program.

The DEP discovered lead in nearby areas. Putnam said the agency also has a document that indicated National Lead Industries, which at one time had paint manufacturing facilities in the two towns, was involved. In September, the DEP turned the case over to the EPA because, he said, National Lead would not help with the cleanup.

Putnam said the Cheesequake Creek area was not tested by the DEP.

Larry Hajna, a DEP spokesman, said his agency posted signs and fencing in the Laurence Harbor seawall and beach area.

Putnam said the EPA is officially heading the initiative, and the DEP will play a supporting role.

In a statement issued last week, the mayors of Sayreville and Old Bridge blamed National Lead for the contamination. The company owned a 400-acre paint pigment manufacturing plant in Sayreville and a refining operation in Perth Amboy until the 1980s.

Old Bridge Mayor James Phillips stressed again Thursday that the problem should be fixed by the company.

"This is a site where we clearly know where the lead came from and who's responsible," the mayor said, adding, "I want my beach back."

Putnam said National Lead didn't feel they were the only responsible party. Several calls to National Lead Industries, which is based in Dallas, were not returned Thursday.

"We need to get to the bottom of this and determine the best way to remediate it and make sure there's funding to clean it up," said U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone Jr. (D-6th Dist.). The congressman, whose district includes Sayreville and Old Bridge, said he wanted to determine just how extensive the damage is and who is responsible.

"We'll work with the EPA and the DEP to determine these things," he said. "If there is going to be a cost, that has to be incurred by the company that did it."

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COMMENTS (5)

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Posted by **cliffwood** on 03/21/09 at 9:30AM

My family resides on the Cliffwood Beach waterfront. My concern is that this problem does not have a quick and coordinated response. The township of Aberdeen has already begun to plead the 5th. The DEP has told me to call the EPA. The EPA claims that we are not in the danger area and unlike Laurence Harbor Cliffwood Beach is not a swimming beach and therefore ineligible for

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study or cleanup. Cliffwood Beach is a play ground for local children and outdoor enthusiasts. The two beaches are separated by a small tidal creek. To say that a tidal creek that is 20' wide and 3' deep has acted as a barrier between the two beaches without testing is wreckless. According to the EPA a child digging on one side of the creek can be potentially exposed to ten times what is considered safe lead exposure. 20' away in a separate county on a beach that is not designated as a swimming beach that same child is considered safe and the various forms of aquatic life are not a threat to our health. The EPA, DEP, the Township of Aberdeene, the Township of Old Bridge, the Township of Laurence Harbor, Middlesex County, Monmouth County and the state of New Jersey have a responsibility to perform additional testing. It's probable that the problem is wide spread. I doubt anyone would be shocked to hear that if it were the case. All we ask for is truth, honesty and a plan forward.

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Posted by **MDL52** on [03/21/09 at 10:50AM](#)

THIS IS NOT A SURPRISE. WHO IS KIDDING WHO HERE.
NL HAS VANISHED BUT ITS FINGER PRINTS ARE ALL OVER THE PLACE.
HOW DID THEY GET GET A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH WHEN THERE PLANT WAS
DISMANTLED AND WHY WOULDN'T THEY BE HELD RESPONSICBLE.
WHEN I WAS A KID DRIVING OVER THE KILMER BRIDGE WE USE TO HAVE A
CONTEST AS TO WHAT COLORS THERE LAGOONS WOULD BE AND HOW FAR
THE COLOR WOULD LEACH OUT INTO THE BAY.

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Posted by **essen** on [03/21/09 at 12:18PM](#)

Wow a NJ beach with free access? What's a little lead?

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Posted by **FlipityFlop** on [03/21/09 at 4:17PM](#)

How anyone could eat the fish they catch from the toxic laden river?. I remember in the 1980's the red tides and all the garbage that washed ashore, from across the East River down to the Keyport beach towards Sandy Hook.. anyone for Coney Island whitefish?...

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Posted by **skylander52** on [03/22/09 at 8:18AM](#)

Anyone in the Environmental Business should not be surprised by the response time of the EPA or their Contractors. According to the several news articles on this story, the EPA took the samples in September. Using standard turn-around-times with the laboratory it took 1-4 weeks to receive the sample results, which means the EPA received results in October. The EPA did not Connect the dots from September until March.

What did the government know and when did they know it?

Emergency Response should be measured with a watch not a calender.

And these are the folks who are supposed to be protecting us?

If private companies were withholding information they would be going to jail or be sued.

Remember National Lead could not have polluted without the permission of the government.

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